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Dear Friends and Supporters,

For those working in the Arizona education system and parents of students who are currently enrolled in k-12 education in our state, summative assessments are nothing new. In fact, the AIMS exam is given each year to determine if students are learning what they need to know. In the next year, however, we expect the assessment system in place now will be changing for the better.

Assessment scores are used for a variety of accountability measures in Arizona, and they are the main method for tracking our educational progress statewide. Summative assessments, like AIMS, are given toward the end of the year and test whether or not students learned the necessary skills and knowledge over the academic year. In Arizona, this information is used to determine things such as school and district grades, students needing to be retained in third grade as outlined in the recent Move on When Reading law, and high school graduation. The assessment is so important to the system that it is essential we commit to using a high quality one in line with the higher bar we've set.

The state will be administering a new assessment in 2015, which will be selected by the State Board of Education in 2014. No matter what assessment is selected, there are a few qualities that must be included. The new assessment should:

- **Assess Rigorous Standards:** The assessment must be aligned to the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards so that we fairly examine what students have been exposed to all year and what they have learned;
- **Be Technology Based:** A quality assessment should allow for parents and teachers to quickly have access to a student's scores so that necessary interventions can be made in a timely manner;
- **Move to process-based questions and away from "fill in the bubble":** Bubble scan sheets do not provide sufficient evidence that a student has knowledge of a concept. We must allow for deeper questions and require deeper answers;
- **Have Postsecondary "buy-in":** Our postsecondary community must recognize the value of the state assessment scores so that when high school seniors are told they are college ready, colleges and universities agree; and
- **Be Comparable across states:** Not only does cross-state comparability assist families who move a lot, such as our military families, but it also allows us to see how our students are performing in comparison to other students around the country.

In addition to these changes, a new assessment will bring a new base level of scores that will look as though the scores have dropped from the previous year. As we raise standards in Arizona education, it is important that we stay the course as we face such challenges and continue to work toward a more efficient system that better prepares our students to take on the rigors of a 21st Century workplace.

Sincerely,
The Arizona Ready Team